



OFFICIAL PLAYING RULES



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Game Set up & flow

The game will be played between 2 teams of 5 or 7 players each. Five players are required to avoid a reschedule.

1. At the start of each game, captains from both teams meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who starts with the ball. The visiting team calls the toss.
2. The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense. The loser of the coin toss has the choice of direction. There is no option to defer. Possession changes to start the second half to the team that started the game on defense.
3. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its start line and has 4 plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, the team has 4 plays to score a touchdown.
 - a. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, on 3 downs, and elect to "punt" on the 4th down, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its own 5-yard line. If the offensive team goes for it on the 4th down and does not cross midfield, the opposing team will start its possession from the spot.
 - b. Any time there is a 'PUNT or PLAY decision on 4th down, the referee WILL ask the offense's Head Coach to declare 'Punt or Play'. The coach MUST make an immediate decision or risk a delay of game penalty.
4. All possession changes start on offense's start line, with the exception of an interception.
5. At the start of the 2nd half, possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.
6. Away teams wear the white or light side of the jersey.
7. The expectation is there is to be an equal distribution of playing time regardless of talent or ability. We remind all coaches that the priority is learning and growing the enjoyment of the game. We expect all players to have opportunities to possess the ball on offense.

Coaches/Spectators

All Coaches and Assistant Coaches must have registered with SVFL, have required information on file and have been confirmed by the SVFL NFL Flag Commissioner and SVFL E Board. Each team will ONLY consist of 1 Head Coach and up to 2 Assistant Coaches.

1. All Coaches are expected to adhere to NFL FLAG and SVFL philosophies, coaching guidelines and code of conduct. All coaches and assistant coaches must sign a code of conduct form, prior to first practice. Parents/Spectators/Players will be held to the code of conduct as well.
2. Only 1 Head Coach and 2 Assistant Coaches per team are allowed on the sidelines. All the team photographers, team moms, fans, ect. must remain 5 yards off the field in the endzone area/or designated area. SVFL media team is the exception.
3. Only 1 coach per team will be allowed on the field during offensive and defensive possessions. (see below for exceptions)
 - a. K-2 can have up to 2 coaches on the field for offense and defense.
 - b. 5th grade and above - 0 for defense
4. It is the coaches responsibility to keep their fans in designated areas.
5. In accordance with developing the understanding and enjoyment of the game, coaches are expected to teach their players and use "football" plays.
6. Any attempt by the opposing coaches to purposely deceive the other team will not be tolerated. Play and performance should be determined by the players on the field.

Terminology

Boundary Lines	The outer lines marking the playing field's perimeter, including sidelines and end zones.
Line of Scrimmage	(LOS) an imaginary line running through the point of the football and across the width of the field.
Line-to-Gain	The yard line the offense must reach for a first down.
Rush Line	An imaginary line 7 yards from the line of scrimmage on the defense's side.
Offense	The team with possession of the ball.
Defense	The team trying to stop the offense and regain possession.
Passer	Any offensive player who throws the ball, not just the quarterback.
Rusher	The defensive player who starts from the rush line and tries to pressure the quarterback by either pulling flags or blocking passes.
Live Ball	Refers to the period of time that the play is in action. Generally used in regard to penalties. Live ball penalties are considered part of the play and must be enforced before the down is considered complete.
Dead Ball	The time between plays when no action is occurring.
Whistle	Official's signal to stop play for timeouts, end of plays, or game periods.
Inadvertent Whistle	An official's whistle that is sounded in error.
Charging	When a ball-carrier illegally runs directly into a set defensive player. This includes leading with the head or making contact with shoulder, forearm, or chest.
Flag Guarding	An illegal act when the ball-carrier tries to block defenders from pulling their flags - whether by stiff-arming, dropping their elbow/head, or using the ball itself as a shield.
Shovel Pass	A legal forward pass across the LOS (Underhand, backhand or by pushing the ball forward).
Lateral	A backward or parallel toss of the ball by the ball-carrier.
Unsportsmanlike Conduct	Confrontational or offensive behavior or language.

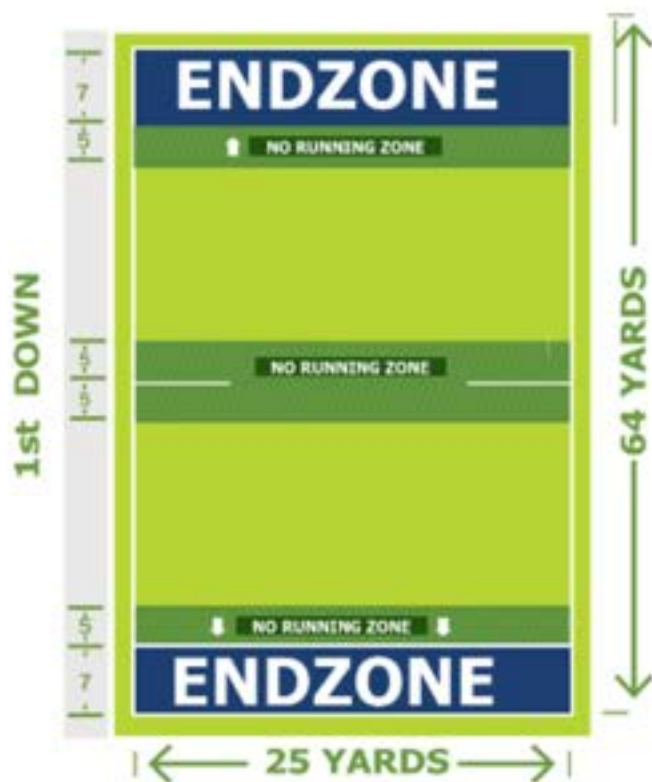
Equipment Checklist

1. All players must wear OFFICIAL NFL FLAG belts and flags. All players MUST wear mouthguards at all times on the field. Game balls will be provided. NO team balls.
 - a. Flag belts and flags can not be the same color as shorts or pants.
 - b. Flags may NOT be cut.
2. Players must wear sneakers/cleats. Cleats are preferred and are safer over sneakers. Cleats with exposed metal are NEVER allowed and must be removed.
3. Players may tape forearms, hands and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow and knee pads. Braces with exposed metal are not allowed.
4. Players must remove all jewelry (for hard to remove jewelry like a nose ring or cartilage piercing, taping exposed areas is acceptable, although the risk of it getting ripped exists)
5. NO hard billed hats are allowed, winter beanie style is permitted
6. Players may wear soft shell helmets, halos, and sunglasses but they must be secured at all times while on the field. Prescription glasses are permitted without a strap.
7. Players jerseys must be tucked into shorts or pant (NOT out under the flags)
8. Shorts and pants should not have pockets or belt loops. If they do they must be taped. Games will not be delayed for taping.
9. Electronic communication between player and their coach or spectators is prohibited.
10. Equipment check will be performed prior to start of every game by the game officials or they will be ruled ineligible to play.



Field

1. The field dimensions are 25 yards by 50 yards plus two 7-yard end zones, and a midfield line-to-gain. No-run zones precede each line-to gain by 5 yards.
2. No-run zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays. While in the no run zones (a 5-yard imaginary zone before midfield and before the end zone), teams cannot run the ball in any fashion even if the defense is using their Blitz. All plays must be pass plays beyond the line of scrimmage. Except in the K-2 division, there is not a no run zone.
3. Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.
4. Each offensive team approaches only TWO no-run zones in each drive (one zone 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down, and one zone 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).



Timing & Overtime

1. Games are played on 2 continuous 25 minute halves. Halftime is 5 minutes.
2. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 35 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive one warning before a delay of game penalty is enforced. (There will be leniency with the K-2 division.)
3. There are no team timeouts.
4. Games cannot end on a defensive penalty.
5. If the score is tied at the end of the 50 minutes, the game is considered a tie, no overtime will be played.

Scoring Guide

1. **Touchdown:** 6 points
2. **PAT** (point after touchdown) **1 point** (5-yard line) or **2 points** (10-yard line)
 - a. Note: 1-point PAT is pass only; 2-point PAT can be run or pass. ***K-2 can run the ball there is no run zone**
3. Interception returns on the extra point are worth **2 points**.
4. A safety occurs if the ball carrier's flag is pulled within their own endzone. The defense is awarded 2 points and the ball.
 - a. There are NO safeties in the K-2 decision. The ball will be respotted at the START line.
5. Runners can be called down when their flags are pulled by a defensive player, a flag falls out, they step out of bounds, their knee or arm touches the ground.
6. Interceptions are returnable. Play will resume where the flag is pulled from the intercepting player.

Mercy Rule : When one team is winning by 28 points or more, mercy rule will apply. The leading team will be forced to play down one player for the remainder of the time.



Liveball/Deadball

1. The ball is live at the snap and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead.
2. The official will indicate the neutral zone and line of scrimmage.
 - a. It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense or offense enters the neutral zone. In regards to the neutral zone, the official may give both teams a "courtesy" neutral zone notification to allow their players to move back behind the line of scrimmage.
3. A player who gains possession in the air is considered inbounds as long as one foot comes down in the field of play.
4. Substitutions may be made at the time in between plays.
5. Any official can whistle the play dead.
6. Play is ruled "dead" when:
 - a. The ball hits the ground.
 - i. If the ball hits the ground as a result of a bad snap, the ball is then placed where the ball hit the ground. (K-2 will be automatic reply on a bad snap and there will be no loss of down)
 - b. The ball-carrier's flag is pulled. **(the ball is spotted where the BALL was at the time the flag was pulled NOT at the location of where the flag was pulled)**
 - c. The ball-carrier steps out of bounds.
 - d. A touchdown or PAT is scored.
 - e. The ball-carrier's knee or arm hits the ground.
 - f. The ball-carrier's flag falls out.
 - g. The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one or no flag(s).
 - h. The 7 second pass clock expires. (K-2 at ref discretion) - Refs to count out loud.
 - i. Inadvertent whistle.
 - j. Ball-carrier leaves their feet to dive, jump or hurdle a player (Exception: A player can dive to catch a pass or pull a flag.)

Liveball/Deadball cont.

NOTE: There are no fumbles. The ball becomes a dead ball. (If the ball is fumbled forwards then it will be spotted where the ball carrier lost possession.)

7. If an inadvertent whistle occurs, the offense will have one untimed down. The offense also has two options:
 - a. Take the ball where it was when the whistle blew, and the down is consumed
 - b. Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.

8. Officials/Referees decisions are FINAL. Absolutely no challenge of any play or call. Coaches may voice their concern after the game only to an SVFL official on site in a calm and productive manner.

Running Game

1. The ball is spotted where the ball is when the flag is pulled.
2. The quarterback cannot directly run beyond the line of scrimmage with the ball, except for blitz plays that occur outside of the 2 "no run" zones. The quarterback is the offensive player who receives the snap. In K-2, the quarterback can run anytime the player is blitzed.
3. The offense may use multiple handoffs.
 - a. **"Center sneak" play is not allowed. The QB is not allowed to handoff to the center on the first handoff of the play.**
4. Laterals, tosses, pitches are allowed behind the line of scrimmage. Teams can lateral one time beyond the line of scrimmage.
 - a. Definition of a "Legal Handoff" - Total loss of possession directly from 1 offensive play to another.
5. Teams are not allowed to run in any fashion in the 2 no run zones. (Reminder: Each offensive team approaches only TWO no-run zones in each drive - one 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down and one 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD). ***If the QB is blitzed they can not run the ball.**
6. Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
7. Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
8. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding and the play is dead.
9. Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull.
 - a. Players spinning out of control will be called for flag guarding.

Running Game

10. Runners may leave their feet if there is a clear indication that he/she has done so to avoid collision with another player without a flag guarding penalty enforced.
11. Offensive players may not run with the ball-carrier. This will be considered blocking.
12. Flag obstruction - All jerseys MUST be tucked in before play begins. The flags must be on the player's hips and free from obstruction. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered flag guarding. "Extra" piece from flag belt may NOT hang (tie, tape, tuck or cut)
13. Absolutely no stiff arming allowed
 - a. Penalty: Stiff Arm, 10 yards from the spot of the penalty
14. Roughing the passer - Defensive players must make a definite effort to avoid charging into the passer after it is clear the ball has been thrown, also there should be no attempts to hit the player's arm during a throwing motion.
 - a. Penalty: Roughing the Passer, 10 yards, automatic first down
15. BLOCKING - NO Blocking of any kind.



Passing

1. Laterals, tosses, and pitches are allowed behind the line of scrimmage.
 - a. The quarterback may throw the ball away to avoid a sack. **There is no intentional grounding penalty.**
2. Shovel passes are allowed but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.
3. The quarterback has a seven-second "pass clock." If a pass is not thrown within the seven seconds, the play is dead and it is considered a sack. The ball will be spotted where the quarterback is standing once the 7 second clock runs out. Once the ball is handed off, the 7-second rule is no longer in effect. (counted by the ref)

Receiving

1. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the Center and the QB if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage to another offensive player).
2. Only one player is allowed in motion at a time. All motion must be parallel to the line of scrimmage and no motion is permitted toward the line of scrimmage.
3. A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception.
4. In the case of a simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.

Rushing the Passer

1. All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of 7 yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Up to two (2) players can rush the quarterback. Rushers **MUST** identify themselves by raising their hand before the snap. Rushers **MUST** rush the passer immediately after the snap. Delayed rush is **NOT** permitted. Players not rushing the quarterback can defend the line of scrimmage.
 - a. **NO BLITZING** in K-2
2. Once the ball is handed off, tossed, lateralled or pitched behind the line of scrimmage by the QB, the seven-yard and 7 second rules are no longer in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
 - a. ALL defenders must start the play 5 yards off the line of scrimmage. Defense can not advance forward until the ball leaves the QBs hands (via hand off or throw) with the exception of the blitz. IF the offensive team is within 5 yards (the no run zone) of the first down line or the endzone, the defense can start 1 yard off the line of scrimmage.
 - b. Exception of High School division. Players not blitzing may defend the line of scrimmage.
3. A special marker, or the referee, will designate a rush line seven yards from the line of scrimmage.
 - a. A legal rush/blitz is: any rush by the 1 or 2 designated rushers, 7 yards from the line of scrimmage.
 - i. A rush from anywhere on the field **AFTER** the ball has been handed off by the quarterback.



Rushing the Passer

b. A penalty may be called for an illegal rush for the following.

- i. The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass - illegal rush (5-yards from the line of scrimmage and first down).
- ii. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped -is offsides (5-yards from line of scrimmage and first down).
- iii. Any defensive player not lined up at the rush line crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed off - illegal rush (5-yards from the line of scrimmage and first down).
- iv. If the offense draws the identified rusher(s) across the 7 yard marker prior to the snap of the ball, the rusher(s) CANNOT legally rush. Jumping the rush is not a penalty until the rusher crosses the line of scrimmage prior to a handoff, pitch, lateral or forward pass.
- v. Teams are not required to rush/blitz the QB with the 7 second clock in effect.

4. Player rushing the QB may not attempt to block a pass.

5. The offense cannot impede the rusher in any way. The rusher has the right to a clear path to the quarterback, regardless of where they line up prior to the snap. If the "path or line" is occupied by a moving offensive player, then it is the offense's responsibility to avoid the rusher. Any disruption to the rusher's path and/or contact will result in an impeding the rusher penalty. If the offensive player does not move after the snap, then it is the rusher's responsibility to go around the offensive player and to avoid contact.

6. A sack occurs if the quarterback's flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball will be spotted where the ball is once the flag is pulled.

Flag Pulling

1. A legal flag pull takes place when the ball carrier is in full possession of the ball.
2. Defenders can dive to pull flags but cannot **tackle, hold, or run through the ball carrier when pulling flags**. At the refs discretion IF A PLAYER is TACKLED (Tackled will be defined as an unsafe play on the ball carrier that results in the defensive player taking down the offensive player without a clear attempt on pulling the flag.) with an open field in front of them IT IS AN AUTOMATIC TD FOR OPPOSING TEAM. COACH, PLAYER AND PARENT WILL GET WARNINGS. TACKLING DURING NFL FLAG CAN RESULT IN REMOVAL OF PLAYER FROM GAME, SEASON AND/OR LEAGUE.
3. It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball carrier's possession at any time.
4. If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during the play, the player is down immediately upon possession of the ball and the play ends or where The ball is caught.
5. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball.
6. Flag guarding is an attempt by the ball carrier to obstruct the defender's access to the flags by stiff arming, dropping the head, hand, arm or shoulder or intentionally covering the flags with the football jersey.

Formations

1. Offenses must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the center) and up to six players on the line of scrimmage. The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage. Offensive players must line up AT LEAST 3 feet (about 1 arm length) from the nearest teammate.
 - a. One player at a time may go in motion 1-yard behind and parallel to the line of scrimmage.
 - b. No motion is allowed toward the line of scrimmage.
2. Movement by a player who is set or a player who runs toward the line of scrimmage while in motion is considered a false start.
3. The center must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion between his/her legs or sideways to a player in the backfield. Snap can be under center, pistol or shotgun style or side snapped.
 - a. In co-ed division if a female is playing center, the ball needs to be side snapped if the QB is receiving the snap under center.

Penalties

1. The REFEREE will call all the penalties
2. Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
3. All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted. (Spot fouls)
4. Only the team captain (*high school division) or head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players or Spectators may not question calls.
5. Games may not end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines it.
6. Penalties are assessed live ball then dead ball. Live ball penalties must be assessed before play is considered complete.
7. Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.
8. Spot fouls administered in the end zone: Defensive (Ball on one-yard line, first down) / Offensive (Safety)

Penalties

i. Defensive spot fouls

Defensive pass interference	Automatic first down
Holding/Illegal Contact	+5 yards and automatic first down
Stripping	+5 yards and automatic first down

ii. Offensive spot fouls

Screening or blocking	-5 yards and loss of down
Charging	-5 yards and loss of down
Flag guarding	-5 yards and loss of down
Holding/Illegal Contact	-5 yards and loss of down

v. Defensive penalties

Defensive unnecessary roughness	+10 yards and automatic first down
Defensive unsportsmanlike conduct	+10 yards and automatic first down
Offside / illegal substitution	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Illegal rush <small>(Starting rush from inside 7-yard marker)</small>	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Illegal flag pull <small>(Before the receiver has the ball)</small>	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Roughing the passer	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Taunting	+10 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down

v. Offensive penalties

Offensive unnecessary roughness	-10 yards and loss of down
Offensive unsportsmanlike conduct	-10 yards and loss of down
Offside / false start / illegal substitution	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal forward pass <small>(Any pass received or lands behind the line of scrimmage or throwing a pass after crossing the line of scrimmage)</small>	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Offensive pass interference	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal motion <small>(More than one person moving)</small>	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Delay of game	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Impeding the rusher	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal Procedure	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Taunting	-10 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down

Unsportsmanlike Conduct

1. If the field monitor or referee witnesses any acts of intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped, and the player will be ejected from the game. The decision is made at the referee's discretion. No appeals will be considered. **INTENTIONAL PHYSICAL PLAY WILL NOT BE PERMITTED!**
2. Offensive or confrontational language is **NOT** allowed. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the officials will determine if a warning or immediate ejection is warranted
3. Players, Coaches or Spectators may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach or official. If the field monitor, member of the SVFL board or referee witness any act that any individual physically or verbally abuses any opponent, coach or official that individual could be issued a warning and/or up to immediate removal from the league of player or family.
4. Ball-carriers **MUST** make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position.
5. Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags. Offensive players may **NOT** initiate contact at the line of scrimmage with defenders, in the official judgment. **ROUGH PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.**
6. Fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship as well:
 - a. Yell to cheer on your players, not to harass officials, coaches or other team players or spectators.
 - b. Keep comments clean and profanity free.
 - c. Compliment **ALL** players, not just one
7. Fans are required to keep fields safe and kid friendly:
 - a. Keep younger kids and equipment a minimum of 10 yards off the field
 - b. Stay to the end zone and sideline **NOT** in between fields.
 - c. dispose of your garbage
8. Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties:
 - a. Defense + 10 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
 - b. Offense - 10 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
 - c. Two unsportsmanlike penalties on any player or coach in a game is automatic DQ from that game and may lead to additional discipline.